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DECKING SYSTEM AND ANCHORING DEVICE

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DECKING SYSTEM AND ANCHORING DEVICE
(Attorney Docket No. HWE-107A)

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention is directed to an improved anchoring device for joining adjacent boards, e.g. decking systems, more specifically, the invention is an anchoring device, as well as a system containing an anchoring device and 10 decking boards in combination. The system provides the ability for pre-setting distances between adjacent boards and attaching to at least one joint board while securing at least one adjacent board. Thus, the anchoring device 15 physically joins two adjacent boards in the same plane to a third, supporting board.

2. Information Disclosure Statement

The following patents are representative of the state of the art for wood joining devices, equipment and methods:

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U.S. Patent No. 1,184,080 to D'Arcy

describes a structure of the class described, the combination of frame pieces disposed at an angle to each other and plate-like corner irons having angularly disposed flanges, said corner irons being arranged in opposed pairs on the sides of and secured to the ends of meeting frame pieces with their flanges engaging the inner edges

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thereof in overlapping telescoping relation to each other, the inner flanges having vertical

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nail slots therein and brads on their edges driven into the frame pieces, the outer flanges

having nail perforations opposite the nail slots,
there being nails disposed through the said
perforations and slots and driven into the frame.

U.S Patent No. 2,332,081 to G.M. Hunt et al

5 is directed to a wooden panel. It is described as
a panel comprising wooden strips joined along
their edges with glue, each strip having at least
one groove in its edge matching groove in the
edge of the adjoining strip, an asbestos
10 millboard spline fitted in the matching grooves
and bridging the joint between the strips,
crossbands covering the strips on both sides of
the panel, and veneers covering the crossbands.

U.S. Patent No. 2,362,252 to Ellinwood

15 describes a wall structure of the character
described comprising a pair of adjacent wallboard

panels having meeting edges, each of said panels
being formed with a groove opening into its
meeting edge, the groove in each panel providing
an outer lip and an inner lip, said outer lips
being in abutting relation, a joining strip
permanently secured to the under surface of said
outer lips, said inner lips being spaced, a T-
shaped connecting member movably positioned in
said groove and having a base in spaced relation
to said inner lips, and means for anchoring said
connecting member to a structural element.

U.S. Patent No. 2,398,603 to Soderberg
describes a joining staple, comprising a metal
body having at least two portions extending at
right angles to each other and at least two teeth
carried upon each of said portions, each of said

teeth consisting of a flat substantially rectangular body having a cutting edge extending substantially parallel to its body portion, the cutting edges of all of said teeth being located in one plane, each of said portions having another cutting edge extending between the teeth of that portion, the second mentioned cutting edges being also located in one plane.

U.S. Patent No. 2,406,387 to Lank describes
10 the method of constructing a plurality of wooden
posts each of which has a connector element
incorporated therein adjacent each end thereof
which method comprises forming a plurality of
longitudinally extending grooves in one side of
15 each of a pair of wooden blanks from which the
posts are to be formed, forming a transverse

groove adjacent each end of said side of each of
said blanks with the transverse grooves
intersecting the longitudinal grooves, providing
a pair of connector retaining members with a
plurality of seats for receiving connector
elements, the number and spacing of said seats in
each of said connector retaining members
conforming to the number and spacing of the
longitudinal grooves in each of said blanks,
10 placing connector elements in each of said seats,
positioning said blanks with their grooved sides
together and with said connector retaining
members in said transverse grooves, bonding said
blanks together, and severing the thus bonded
assembly along longitudinal lines intermediate
15 said longitudinal grooves.

U.S Patent No. 4,641,988 to Ganner is directed to a fitting for releasably joining two structural components. It is illustrated for releasably joining two structural components particularly plate-shaped structural components which extend at a right angle relative to one another, a fitting has a preferably cylindrical locking element which can be inserted either directly in a bore in the first structural component or it can be inserted indirectly in a housing, and a holding piece with a holding projection anchored in the second structural component. In the assembled position, the holding projection abuts against one or two gripping surfaces of the locking element which gripping surfaces are of, for example, eccentric shape,

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and the holding projection is pulled toward the locking element when the locking element is turned. The holding piece is constructed plate-shaped and is insertable in a slot in the second structural component.

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U.S. Patent No. 4,682,458 to Sparrow describes a floor composed of parallel spaced beams having flanges and blocks of polystyrene foam which are laid on the flanges to bridge the gaps between the beams. Boards are laid on the polystyrene blocks, and are supported by the blocks, which form load-bearing members of the floor. The blocks may have flanged portions extending over the beams, so as to provide heat insulation.

U.S Patent No. 5,004,027 to Legler et al.

5 illustrates a biscuit joiner. It is described as a biscuit joiner for cutting semi-elliptical slots in opposing edges of workpieces which are to be joined along those edges includes a housing adapted to be mounted upon the quill of a multi-purpose woodworking tool, which housing encloses a rotary saw blade adapted to be attached to a spindle projecting from the quill on which the housing is mounted. A spring loaded guide projects from the front face of the housing and has a slot therethrough, so that when the front face of the guide is engaged by an edge of a workpiece to be slotted the guide can be pushed inwardly against spring pressure, allowing the 10 rotary saw blade to be exposed and form a slot in the edge of the workpiece. Adjustable stops are

provided on the guide so that a desired depth of cut will automatically be made after adjustment.

An alternative construction of this biscuit joiner is especially adapted for use in conjunction with a conventional drill press, with the arbor which carries the saw blade being clamped in the chuck on the drive spindle of the drill motor.

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U.S. Patent No. 5,071,280 of Turner

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describes a sheet metal connector that is provided for use with timber building components of the type that has nails to be driven through the sheet metal into the timber. The connector has substantially U-shaped cuts in the sheet metal to define nailing tongues. The nailing tongues have a deformation for use in providing a

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nail entry point so that a nail driven therethrough will serve to drive the nailing tongue into the timber.

U.S. Patent No. 5,160,211 to Gilb describes a connector for securing a wood railing to a wood post by fasteners which are in shear in relation to all forces imposed upon the railing. The connector is a single piece sheet metal member formed in a generally triangular cross section with openings provided for the insertion of the fasteners. The connector is placed on the underside of the railing to eliminate all top nailing or driving of screws through the top side of the rail.

U.S. Patent No. 5,182,891 to Slocum

describes a flooring construction which is

provided having a unitary construction with a top layer providing a finished flooring surface and an insulation layer adjacent the top layer. The flooring panel includes an upper portion and a lower portion. The upper portion has a larger dimension than the lower portion and extends outwardly beyond the lower portion. A recessed portion between the upper portion and the lower portion defines a channel. A plurality of interlock support elements having a vertical web and an upper horizontal flange are arranged so that the horizontal flange extends into the channel. The vertical web extends below the lower portion to raise the flooring.

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U.S. Patent No. 5,251,996 to Hiller et al

describes a connecting element for connecting two

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parts generally in a connection plane has a first portion for connecting the element relative to a first of the parts and second portion for connecting the element relative to the second part. The second portion includes actuation members which on relative movement of the parts substantially along the connection plane urge the parts forcefully towards each other.

U.S Patent No. 5,377,732 to Fujii et al
10 illustrates a wood joining structure and method thereof. It is described as a technique is provided for joining wood members. A plurality of slits are formed on the end portions of wood pieces desired to be joined, and the end portions are abutted with corresponding slits in alignment 15 to form a common surface. Each of the abutted

wood end portions is fixed by temporary fixing means to a desired joining state. Thereafter, an adhesive agent is applied into the interior surfaces of the slits. Connecting plates, e.g., 5 made of a reinforced plastic material coated with the adhesive agent, are inserted into the aligned slits. The adhesive agent is then hardened.

U.S. Patent No. 5,419,649 to Gilb describes an intermediate rail to post connection including 10 a sheet metal connector for attaching a wood intermediate rail to a wood post is disclosed. The sheet metal connector is preferably formed with a base member, an integral seat member and a post engaging flange. Preferably four fasteners 15 which may be either screws or nails are inserted through suitable openings in the sheet metal

connector. Two of the fasteners pierce the sheet metal connector, the intermediate rail and the post in such a way as to be in double shear. The other two fasteners are inserted through the sheet metal connector directly into the wood post. The sheet metal connector is placed on the underside of the intermediate rail and all fasteners are therefore inserted from the underside of the intermediate rail.

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U.S Patent No. 5,458,433 to Stastny

explicates a biscuit and joint made using same.

It is described as a biscuit having octagonal outer periphery is used to form a joint between first and second workpieces. The biscuit fits

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within arcuate slots formed in the workpieces, with glue placed in the slots and/or on the

biscuit before the joint is put together. The biscuit is made of an anhydrous compressed wood.

U.S. Patent No. 5,480,117 to Fleming, III describes a bracket for mounting a rotary lock member in the frame of a panel which is provided. The bracket is a preferably U-shaped body having a base and two legs extending therefrom. The inner dimension of the bracket is chosen to allow insertion of a rotary lock member therein. Panel engaging steps and protrusions are located on the outside surface of each leg for engaging the frame material. The legs of the bracket are biased inwardly towards one another, such that when a locking member is inserted therein, the legs are pressed outwardly, driving the protrusions into the frame material. A number of

bores are located in the bracket to allow supplemental locking members to lock the bracket to the frame.

U.S Patent No. 5,529,428 to Bischof is directed to a metallic structural element for connecting workpieces consisting of wood, woodworking material or plastic. It is described as a metallic structural element for connecting workpieces consisting of wood, woodworking material or plastic, consisting of a lamellar part, which provides the non-positive connection with the first workpiece provided with a groove and a transverse hole, and a bolt-like part which, through screwing or pinning, realizes the non-positive connection with the second workpiece provided with a longitudinal hole. The lamellar

part has, in the center, a hole which is at right angles to the plane of the lamella and is intended for fixing in the groove of the workpiece. Variants having a wing-like long or 5 rectangular short lamellar part and a bolt-like part in the form of a conical wood screw, cylindrical screw, screw having a metal thread, threaded sleeve or pin. Accessories: screwing tool and drilling template.

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U.S Patent No. 5,564,248 to Callies

describes a construction hanger for supporting a joist, rafter or the like to a support beam, in which the hanger is provided with a holddown tab 15 for insuring proper seating of the joist to hanger during the installation process. The invention also relates to a method of making such

a hanger.

U.S. Patent No. 5,603,580 to Leek et al

describes a positive fastener-angling device for
positioning an elongated fastener with respect to
5 the face of a sheet metal connector and a wood
member only at a preselected angle which is
substantially less than 90 degrees by forming a
slit-cut in the sheet metal connector by means of
a die which progressively at the same station,
10 forms a fastener guideway in the shape of a half
cone. The fastener opening and the guideway are
dimensioned so that the fastener can only
penetrate the sheet metal connector at a
preselected angle set at the factory.

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U.S. Patent No. 5,660,016 to Erwin et al

describes an extruded plastic decking plank for

mounting to an underlying support structure, the
plank having a rigid foam core, a resilient outer
plastic shell, and a clamping portion for
securing the plank to the support structure. The
5 top surface of the plank can be provided with a
non-slip surface. The invention also includes an
attachment system for securing such decking
planks to a support structure by engaging the
clamping portions of the decking planks onto
10 clamps or hold down blocks which are secured onto
the support structure, and which permit relative
motion between the planks and the structure in
the planks' lengthwise direction to prevent
stress and buckling caused by uneven expansion.

15 Notwithstanding the prior art, the present
invention is neither taught nor rendered obvious

thereby.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is an anchoring device for joining three boards. It includes a substantially flat horizontal top element having a top view configuration which includes two sides and has a first predetermined width as measured side to side (This first predetermined width is measured at a maximum width between the two sides). The top element has an imaginary center line and there is at least one substantially vertical support member attached to the underside of the top element along the imaginary center line and extending downwardly therefrom for a predetermined length. This substantially vertical support member has two sides and a

second predetermined width as measured side to

side at its maximum width. There is also a

substantially flat horizontal bottom element

having a flat bottom view configuration which

5 includes two sides and has a third predetermined width as measured side to side at its maximum width.

The first predetermined width is greater

than both the second predetermined width and the

10 third predetermined width, and the third

predetermined width is greater than the second

predetermined width. By this configuration, the

present invention anchor device is adapted to

maintain the top element in a predetermined

15 position during use for joinder of two adjacent
boards which have been pre-cut with receiving

slots, and to position the bottom element upon a support board on which the two adjacent boards rest for attachment of the anchoring device to the support board for anchoring and support of the two adjacent boards.

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Preferably, the anchoring device bottom element has a generally trapezoidal shape with its greatest width at a trapezoidal base. Also, the vertical support member may have a plurality of recesses with support columns located therebetween.

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The anchoring device of the present invention may be fabricated with any available material, but is preferably made of molded plastic material capable of having a metal fastener driven through.

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The present invention also relates to a decking system. It includes a plurality of decking boards, each decking board having a top, a bottom, two sides, and two ends, and at least one groove located along one of the sides.

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Preferably, there is a groove on both sides, except that end pieces may only have one groove. The groove adapted to receive the anchoring device described above, which is included in the system.

In preferred embodiments, the boards have an upper portion above the slots which is wider than a lower portion below the slots.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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The present invention should be more fully understood when the specification herein is taken

in conjunction with the drawings appended hereto

wherein:

Figure 1 illustrates a top view of one

preferred embodiment of the present invention

5 anchoring device, Figure 2 illustrates a front

view, and Figure 3 illustrates an end view

thereof;

Figure 4 illustrates a detailed end view of

the present invention anchoring device shown in

10 Figures 1, 2 and 3, with relative width

illustrated;

Figures 5 and 6 show alternative embodiment

top views of present invention anchoring devices;

Figure 7 shows an end view of the present

15 invention device shown in Figures 1 through 3 but

being attached to a joist and a first deck board

and a second deck board where both deck boards are supported by that joist; and

Figure 8 shows an end view of a preferred present invention decking system board.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

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In Figure 1, there is shown a top view of present invention anchoring device 1. Device 1 includes a top element 2 having a flat top surface 3 as shown, and a top view shape of a rectangle. It includes walls 5 and 7, which are parallel to one another in preferred embodiments, but need not be parallel to be within the scope of the present invention. In this case, they are perfectly symmetrical and have flat sidewalls 5 and 7. Perfect symmetry is preferred but not essential. Without exceeding the scope of the

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present invention, these top element shapes could be slightly modified, such as having non-linear segments, e.g., arcs or linear segments at angles.

5 *Sub B>* Top element 2 also includes an imaginary attachment line 8 below which extends a vertical support member and a bottom element.

10 *Sub B>* Figures 2 and 3 show front and end (right side) views, respectively of device 1 shown in

Figure 1. Thus, device 1 includes top element 2, a vertical support member 4 with walls 9 and 11, and recesses such as recess 17, creating support columns, such as column 15. Bottom element 6 has a substantially flat horizontal bottom surface 21 and tapered walls 13 and 15. Anchoring device 1 has a predetermined height so as to rest on a

joist in such a way as to establish anchor top
element 2 at a predetermined height from the
joist for attachment of two adjacent boards
thereto which have pre-cut slots corresponding
thereto.

5  Figure 4 shows a blown up end view of
anchoring device 1 as shown in Figure 3, with
identical parts identically numbered in part, and
with width designations, as illustrated.

10 Specifically, in Figure 4, top element 2 has a
width W_{TB} , as measured from side to side at its
maximum width. Vertical support member 4 has
width W_M , as measured from side to side at its
maximum width. Likewise, bottom element 6 has a
width W_B , as measured from side to side at its
maximum width. It is important to note that W_T ,

the first predetermined width, being the width of top element 2, is greater than both W_M , the predetermined width of vertical support member 4, as well as W_B , the predetermined width, being a

5 third predetermined width of bottom element 6.

In other words, the width of the top element is greater than both the width of the vertical support member and the width of the bottom element. Moreover, the width of bottom element 6, W_B , while it is less than width W_T of top element 2, it is also greater than the width of vertical support member 4, W_B . These critical relationships allow for maximum support of adjoining slotted boards while minimizing the space between the boards to typical or conventional deck spacing.

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Figure 5 and Figure 6 show top views,
respected with, of present invention anchoring
device 31 and 41 to nearly illustrate that the
top view of the top element need not be of
parallel sides. Anchoring device 31 of Figure 5
has parallel sides which are tapered at both ends
while anchoring device 41 of Figure 6 has
subsequently not parallel, non-symmetrical sides.
Parallel, symmetrical, mirror image sides are
preferred in the present invention anchoring
device but as now can be seen, variations may be
made without exceeding the scope of the present
invention.

Sub B) Figure 7 shows present invention anchoring
device 1 in use. Anchoring device 1 is inserted
into pre-cut slot 55 of horizontal beam 45, shown

in its end view of cut wood 51. A staple, nail or screw is passed through anchoring device 1 into joist beam 59. Large staples are preferred and simplest for attachment. This anchor attaches device 1 to joist beam 59 and establishes the elevation of top element 2 so as to match with slot 55.

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10 *as br* Next beam 47 with its slot 57 in its end view of cut wood 53 will be placed adjacent to anchoring device by being slid into position with the top element of anchoring device 1 fitting into slot 57 and the bottom of beam 47 resting on joist 59. By this method, anchoring device 1 attaches all three boards to one another as the top element aspects are typically tight-fitting. The bottom element also aids in placement and

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security by fitting under the edge of the beams as shown in the Figure. Thus, for example, decking boards may be attached without the need for nails or screws entering the beams themselves from the top.

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Figure 8 shows a detailed end view of beam 45 from Figure 7. This is a preferred component of the present invention decking system. As can be seen, the slot 55 represents a midpoint or approximate midpoint imaginary line 65 divides the beam into an upper or top portion 67, and a lower or bottom portion 69. As can be seen, the top portion 67 has a greater width W_{TB} , than the bottom portion W_{BB} . This provides for tightness of the anchoring device, increases stability and hides more of the anchoring device from a top

view, enabling tight top portion beam spacing, yet enabling thicker anchoring devices for strength and stability.

Obviously, numerous modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is therefore understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described herein.

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